



SEISURA INQUIETA.

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Restless Flycatcher.

Turdus inquietus, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xl.

Restless Thrush, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 181.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 263.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. v. p. 120.

Turdus volitans, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. xli.

Volatile Thrush, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 183.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. p. 290.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. v. p. 122.

Seisura volitans, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 250.—Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 256.—

G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit., p. 43.—Nat. Lib. Orn., vol. x., Flycatchers, pl. 12. p. 138.

Jit-tee-gnut, Aborigines of Western Australia.

The Grinder, of the Colonists of Swan River and New South Wales.

THIS species ranges over the whole of the southern portions of the Australian continent, and appears to be as numerous at Swan River as it is in New South Wales, where it may be said to be universally distributed, for I observed it in every part I visited, both among the brushes as well as in the more open portions of the country, in all of which it is apparently a stationary species. It is a bird possessing many peculiar and very singular habits. It not only captures its prey after the usual manner of the other Flycatchers, but it frequently sallies forth into the open glades of the forest and the cleared lands, and procures it by poising itself in the air with a remarkably quick motion of the wings, precisely after the manner of the English Kestrel (*Tinnunculus Alaudarius*), every now and then making sudden perpendicular descents to the ground to capture any insect that may attract its notice. It is while performing these singular movements that it produces the remarkable sound, which has procured for it from the colonists of New South Wales the appellation of “The Grinder.” The singular habits of this species appear to have attracted the notice of all who have paid any attention to the natural history of New South Wales: Mr. Caley observes, “It is very curious in its actions. In alighting on the stump of a tree it makes several semicircular motions, spreading out its tail at the time, and making a loud noise somewhat like that caused by a razor-grinder at work. I have seen it frequently alight on the ridge of my house, and perform the same evolutions:” and Latham says, “It is observed to hover about two feet from the ground, making sudden darts on something, which, by attention, was found to be a sort of worm, which this bird, by a chirping note, and tremulous motion of the wings, with the tail widely expanded, seemed to fascinate out of its hole in the ground.” To this I may add the following account of the actions and manners of this species as observed by Mr. Gilbert in Western Australia:—

“This bird is found in pairs in every variety of situation. Its general note is a loud harsh cry several times repeated; it also utters a loud clear whistle; but its most singular note is that from which it has obtained its colonial name, and which is only emitted while the bird is in a hovering position at a few feet above the ground; this noise so exactly resembles a grinder at work, that a person unaware of its being produced by a bird might easily be misled. Its mode of flight is one of the most graceful and easy imaginable; it rarely mounts high in flying from tree to tree, but moves horizontally with its tail but little spread, and with a very slight motion of the wings; it is during this kind of flight that it utters the harsh note above-mentioned; the grinding note being only emitted during the graceful hovering motion, the object of which appears to be to attract the notice of the insects beneath, for it invariably terminates in the bird descending to the ground, picking up something, flying into a tree close by, and uttering its shrill and distinct whistle.”

The food consists of insects of various kinds, and it is said to devour scorpions also.

The months of September, October and November constitute the breeding-season. The nests observed by me in New South Wales were rather neatly made, very similar to those of *Rhipidura Motacilloides*, cup-shaped, and composed of fine grasses matted together on the outside with cobwebs, and lined with very fine fibrous roots and a few feathers; they were placed on horizontal branches frequently overhanging water. The eggs, which are sometimes only two, but mostly three in number, are dull white, distinctly zoned round the centre with spots of chestnut and greyish brown, the latter colour appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell; their medium length is nine lines and a half by seven lines in breadth. The nests found by Mr. Gilbert in Western Australia were remarkably neat and pretty, and were formed of cobwebs, dried soft grasses, narrow strips of gum-tree bark, the soft paper-like bark of the *Melaleuca*, &c., and were usually lined with feathers or a fine wiry grass, and in some instances horse-hair; the situations chosen for its erection are the most difficult of access, being the upper side, the extreme end and the dead portion of a horizontal branch. The bird is very reluctant to leave the nest, and will almost suffer itself to be handled rather than desert its eggs.

The sexes are very similar in plumage, but the female and young males have the lores or space between the bill and the eye not so deep a black as in the male.

Head and all the upper surface shining bluish black; wings dark brown; tail brownish black; lores deep velvety black; under surface silky white, with the exception of the sides of the chest, which are dull black; irides dark brown; basal half of the sides of the upper mandible and the basal two-thirds of the lower mandible greenish blue; the remainder of the bill bluish black; legs and feet dark bluish brown.

The figures are of the natural size, the upper one exhibiting a rufous tint on the breast, which frequently occurs.